

~~SECRET~~

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY  
Washington

May 15, 1956

INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING FACILITIES

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. The State Department, in a memorandum dated April 3, 1956 from Mr. Arthur L. Richards to Mr. Elmer B. Staats, requested a review in the OCB of the desirability, as a matter of urgency, of increased radio transmitting facilities; specifically the full implementation of NSC Action No. 1386-b. A copy of the State Department request is Attachment No. 1.
2. NSC Action No. 1386-b is quoted as follows: "Concurred in principle with the activation, by the Voice of America and other U.S.-supported international broadcasting facilities, of additional high-powered transmitters in appropriate locations, subject to normal budgetary review of the costs involved."

DISCUSSION

3. On December 2, 1952 NSC 137 proposed, for stated reasons, that the use of radio as a medium by the VOA to attempt to penetrate the Iron Curtain be reviewed by the National Security Council and that all construction of new facilities not too far committed should be suspended until a decision had been reached by the NSC. NSC 137 proposed, inter alia, that the broad area of electro-magnetic warfare be examined and more information secured before a decision was taken. As a result of NSC 137 and NSC 137/1, a ban was put upon the construction of additional transmitting facilities except for three which were already substantially complete.
4. There was no high-level clearance, approval, or authority for the removal of this ban on installation of high-powered transmitters until NSC Action 1386-b, April 28, 1955.
5. The significance of this NSC action is the removal of the previously imposed ban on new construction. The wording of the action "concurred in principle" restores previous authority and provided permission for the appropriate agencies to proceed with the planning and installation of additional high-powered transmitters in terms of all factors bearing on the subject.
6. The alleged agreement between the President and the Undersecretary of State at the NSC meeting of February 3, 1955 (reference Parag. 5 of

-Richards-Staats -

~~SECRET~~

- 2 -

Richards-Staats memorandum, dated April 3, 1956) "that the four existing warehoused high-power transmitters should be utilized in combatting communist propaganda" has never been seen as a matter of record or otherwise made known to those who normally would "need to know". At the NSC meeting of February 3, 1955 an ODM Progress Report on Parag. 8 of NSC 169, dated January 10, 1955 was noted by the Council (NSC Action No. 1317). NSC Action No. 1317 also directed ODM to submit for early NSC consideration recommendations based on the reference Progress Report and views of the J.C.S., together with estimates of the cost of implementing such recommendations.

7. The ODM recommendations were transmitted to the NSC by memo dated March 24, 1955. These recommendations included four specific projects. The NSC Planning Board recommendation to the Council dated April 15, 1955 was modified slightly by the Council and approved by the President as NSC Action 1386-b, quoted in Parag. 2 above.

It should be noted that the NSC action "concurred in principle" and did not accept the recommendations in Parag. 8 of the ODM report that VOA install two 1-megawatt transmitters in the Greek area, one 1-megawatt transmitter near Tangier and one 1-megawatt transmitter in the Philippines.

8. It is clear from the above that at no time has an NSC action approved by the President instructed USIA to install the broadcasting facilities referred to above. All that has happened was a previous ban against such installation was removed and USIA was permitted to go ahead with the provision of additional facilities as needed.

It should be noted that USIA makes a continuous review of the need for transmitting facilities in terms of its mission, its resources, and foreign policy and international developments. As a result of this review a number of steps have been taken or are planned to increase our broadcasting potential. These are set forth, for information and background purposes, in Attachment No. 2.

9. There are no known policy or international political considerations, and none are stated in the State Department Memorandum of April 3, 1956, which have not already been taken into account in current planning or which would warrant changes in plans at this time. The continuance of Soviet radio activities in the Balkan and Middle East areas has been long anticipated. The failure to secure a freer interchange of ideas, and the assertion by the Soviets of their right to jam, at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Geneva, last October, have already been taken into account in USIA facility planning.

-RECOMMENDATIONS -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

- 3 -

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. That if there are significant international political and/or foreign policy considerations, in addition to those already made known, which have a bearing on the scope and level of international broadcasting, they should be made available to the appropriate operating agencies to assist them in their facilities planning.
11. That, in consideration of the lead time involved in the construction of major radio transmitting facilities (24 to 36 months), estimates of future changes in the international political situation and/or foreign policy objectives as they relate to the need of radio transmitting facilities should be made available to operating agencies as far in advance as possible.

Attachment No. 1

Memorandum dated April 3, 1956 from  
Arthur L. Richards to Mr. Elmer Staats

Attachment No. 2

Background Information on USIA Facilities  
Planning

~~SECRET~~